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Approved For Release 2001/05/01 : CIA-RDP80-01826R000200120002-9

ANNUAL REPORT
BENEFITS AND COUNSELING BRANCH
BENEFITS AND SERVICES DIVISION
OFFICE OF PERSONNEL

Approved For Release 2001/05/01 : CIA-RDP80-01826R000200120002-9

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ANNUAL REPORT

BENEFITS AND COUNSELING BRANCH

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS

1 July 1966 - 30 June 1967

Attached, as a part of this report, is a statistical summary which, when studied with the narrative comments, will reveal to the reader a continuation of growth and scope of Branch activity and some dramatic increases in certain areas of work.

It should be noted at the outset that the number of manhours devoted to Branch programs cannot be measured entirely by a statistical reporting of cases handled. Within each activity, cases will require a varying degree of time and effort. For example, some death and employee emergency cases may require extensive after-hours activity, frequent contact with the next of kin, liaison within the Agency and with other Federal agencies, and often with private attorneys; others may require little effort of this type. Also, some cases can be processed in a few weeks, others often require months of continued effort. The same is true with respect to medical claims, counseling and other programs.

GENERAL COMMENTS

The Branch is responsible for a variety of programs; several are required by statute, while others are services for Agency personnel and their dependents. These programs are:

Statutory Programs

1. Federal Employees' Compensation Act
2. Overseas Medical Benefits for
Employees and Dependents
3. Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance

Service Programs

1. Casualty Assistance
2. Exit Processing
3. Employee Emergencies

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Service Programs (continued)

4. Personal Affairs Counseling
5. Assistance on Problems of Former Employees
6. Blood Donor Program
7. Savings Bond Campaign
8. PSAS Support
9. Welfare Assistance Board
10. Religious Services
11. Absentee Voter Assistance
12. Bulletin Boards
13. Car Pool Locator
14. Vital Papers Program

At the beginning of this reporting period, 1 July 1966, the Branch consisted of [REDACTED] clerical employees. In September 1966, because of an extremely heavy clerical workload, an additional clerical employee was assigned to the Branch. Also, in March 1967, a "Career Trainee" was assigned to the Branch for a period of training; but, because of several personnel problems that developed in the Branch over the past nine months, the Career Trainee has had to be used in a staff capacity.

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[REDACTED]
employees.

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technician every 4 1/2 months. This high "turnover rate" has necessitated a continual training and orientation program by the Chief and Deputy Chief to assure that all technicians are properly trained and have the necessary flexibility required of Branch personnel.

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During this reporting period, a serious personnel problem developed that lasted several months and sorely taxed the ability of the Branch to function as a unit and to maintain the morale necessary to carry out its responsibility. On another occasion, a senior technician was reassigned, with no notice, and at the end of

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June 1967, after seven weeks, no replacement has been provided.

It is amazing that in spite of these problems the Branch has managed to meet its required deadlines and has, in fact, handled an increased workload in many areas for FY 1967 over FY 1966.

CASUALTY ASSISTANCE

The procedures for handling casualty cases developed over the past several years have again met the challenge of difficult and sensitive cases. While we are always looking for improvements, our present procedures have proven to be adequate in fulfilling our responsibility.

During this reporting period, there were 35 deaths of Agency employees with eight of these deaths occurring overseas. One of these deaths was reported in last year's report as missing-in-action. During this year, necessary steps were taken to declare the individual dead and his affairs were all settled on that basis. In addition, there were 13 deaths of Agency dependents overseas. The table below shows the number of deaths of Agency employees over the last ten years:

Number of Deaths by Fiscal Year

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Deaths</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Deaths</u>
1967	35	1962	38
1966	46	1961	31
1965	35	1960	34
1964	42	1959	36
1963	38	1958	19

Three of the deaths occurring in FY 1967 were in "performance of duty" with two of them occurring overseas. The handling of the affairs in these cases included also the processing of claims with the Bureau of Employees' Compensation, Department of Labor, under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act. All of these cases required special handling with the Bureau of Employees' Compensation because of the sensitivity of the places where the deaths occurred or cover considerations. In addition, one of the deaths occurring overseas during the previous year was processed this year as "performance of duty" and approved by the Bureau of Employees' Compensation because of the inadequate medical care rendered.

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As in previous years, heart conditions continued to be the leading cause of death with accidents a close second. Of the 35 deaths, 11 were the result of heart conditions, 10 were accidental, 8 from cancer, 1 homicide, 1 suicide, and 4 from miscellaneous causes. The average age at death was 45 years, slightly less than last year when it was 46 years.

Employee Deaths FY 1967

(By Age Group)

<u>Ages</u>	<u>No. of Deaths</u>	<u>Ages</u>	<u>No. of Deaths</u>
Under 21	2	46 - 50	8
21 - 25	0	51 - 55	5
26 - 30	1	56 - 60	3
31 - 35	5	61 - 65	2
36 - 40	5	Over 65	<u>1</u>
41 - 45	3		
		Total	35

In settling the affairs of the deceased employees, we found that 29 had insurance with the Agency and the amount of insurance paid in these cases was \$828,000 with \$449,000 paid under the basic coverage and \$379,000 paid under the accidental coverage. Twenty-five had FEGLI coverage in the amount of \$385,000; five had UBLIC coverage in the amount of \$123,000; four had WAEPA insurance totaling \$145,000; and two had FAP for \$175,000.

These death cases required ten trips outside of the Washington metropolitan area during the year in settling the claims.

OVERSEAS MEDICAL CLAIMS

As in the past, the number of claims processed under the Overseas Medical Programs continues to increase slightly. There was a total of 596 claims of which 396 were for dependents and 200 for employees. This is an increase of 25 claims over the previous year.

The cost of the program grows in spite of efforts to process claims of employees under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act where appropriate. During this reporting period, \$225,000 was obligated for the programs.

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MISCELLANEOUS

1. During FY 1967, ten trips were made to settle the Agency affairs of deceased personnel. Three of the trips were to the West Coast, one to the Midwest, one to Florida, and the others were to the eastern part of the United States. In addition, two trips were made to the Midwest in connection with a medical evacuation and disability retirement.
2. The problems of former employees continue to increase. This year the Branch wrote a total of 459 letters to former employees assisting them in problems that developed after their separation. As would be expected, these problems are varied but the majority are questions about W-2's, unemployment compensation, requests for S. F. 50, and retirement refunds.
3. The Branch again enlisted the services of the clergy of the McLean community to conduct a program of Catholic and Protestant religious services in the Auditorium at Christmas and during the Lenten season. Two services were held at Christmas and two services each Wednesday during Lent. The attendance at these services fell off again this year with only 1,537 Catholics and 1,127 Protestants attending. There was no Jewish Passover service offered this year. The Rabbi at the Washington Hebrew Congregation indicated that it was not appropriate to hold services at any place but a Temple.
4. During the year, the Branch Chief was regularly scheduled for a presentation of Employee Benefits at the Support Services course and the Admin Procedures course given by OTR. In addition, many Support types leaving for assignments at overseas posts were briefed by the Branch Chief or Deputy Chief on the many programs of the Branch. The Branch Chief also briefed a special Office of Communications group of wives of the graduation class of Commo Techs who were scheduled for overseas duty.
5. There seemed to be an increased utilization of the facility in the Branch for storing copies of vital documents for Agency personnel. This is probably the result of the Support Bulletin and Employee Bulletin on Employee Benefits.
6. The Branch continues to service the Agency bulletin boards. In Headquarters, there are 34 with two large boards devoted to notices by Agency employees, with additional boards in other Agency buildings. During the year, there were approximately 2,400 notices

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posted by Agency personnel. In addition, posters are placed on all boards, some on a regular basis, telling employees about the Red Cross Bloodmobile, Credit Union, Agency Movie Schedule, Incentive Awards Program, EAA activities, and other special notices such as President Johnson's Equal Employment Opportunity Program and the Open Housing Program.

7. On 19 December 1966, the Branch moved into Room 1G-8101 and for the first time in years the entire Branch was all together in one place. This has contributed to a better flow of work, a better utilization of employees, and has permitted more flexibility in the use of Branch personnel.

8. The Branch continues to serve as "Case Officer" in many PSAS cases, this involves counseling, preparation of summary for presentation to the Board, and the monitoring of the case after approval. During this reporting period, there were several cases where the "Case Officer" prepared a budget for and worked with the applicant for assistance to assure compliance with the budget and repayment of the loan.

9. Plans for an additional Car Pool Locator to serve the Rosslyn area have been completed and the construction has been started and the installation is to be made very soon.

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SECTION II

PLANS AND OBJECTIVES FOR FISCAL YEAR 1968

1. A review of Section I of this report and previous reports shows a steady increase in the amount of work performed by the Branch with approximately the same number of employees during FY 1967. As mentioned in last year's report, one of our objectives was to obtain a greater degree of flexibility, professional as well as clerical, and adaptability to meet the needs of the moment. This flexibility has been achieved only to a limited degree because of the high turnover of professional employees. This is still one of our main objectives and if personnel presently assigned to the Branch remain, we should be able to attain the desired flexibility.

2. During FY 1967, the Branch Chief and Deputy Chief have participated in many Office of Training courses to acquaint Support Personnel, Career Trainees and others enrolled in these courses with the many programs and services offered by the Branch. As a result of these courses together with the many briefings of persons scheduled for overseas assignment, it is felt that a representative of BCB together with a representative of the Insurance Branch should make a trip to acquaint support personnel in foreign stations of the programs and services of the Benefits and Services Division.

3. During the current year, considerable time has been spent in revising the handbook covering the Overseas Medical Programs in order to incorporate additional standards for administering the programs. The publication of this revised handbook is being held pending a policy decision on the relationship of the statutory programs to the hospitalization program under the Health Benefits Act. If the procedures remain the same, we plan to publish the revised handbook and if there are policy changes in procedures, a new handbook will be required.

4. With the decision by the Civil Service Commission to cover certain contract employees with the Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance, it is anticipated there will be increased activity in processing of certifications, waivers and reinstatements in the coming year.

5. Arrangements were completed during FY 1967 for the Red Cross Bloodmobile from the District of Columbia to service NPIC.

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Negotiations are under way to arrange with Arlington County Red Cross to provide a Bloodmobile in the Rosslyn area on a regular schedule for use of Agency employees.

6. Plans are under way at the present time and should be finalized soon that will remove several functions from Benefits and Counseling Branch and place them in a proposed new activity that will be devoted mainly to employee services.

7. A study will be made of all Branch programs remaining after the services referred to in paragraph 6 above are transferred to a new branch in an effort to streamline and formalize procedures to be certain that the functions remaining are performed in the most efficient manner.

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SECTION III

PLANS FOR FISCAL YEAR 1969

It is expected that a revised manual of procedures for all Branch activities will be prepared incorporating the changes that will be made in accordance with the plans and objectives for FY 1968.

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July 3, 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Benefits and Services
Division

SUBJECT : Annual Report - Fiscal Year 1967

Attached is the Branch's Annual Report covering major accomplishments and significant developments during the period 1 July 1966 - 30 June 1967, specific plans for fiscal year 1968, and general objectives for fiscal year 1969.


Acting Chief, Insurance Branch

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Attachments

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Excluded from automatic
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